

On Wednesday 25th May, a Battle of Britain pilot returned to Biggin Hill for the first time since 1941- seventy years! Geoffrey Wellum came to Biggin Hill with No. 92 Squadron at the height of the Battle of Britain. Arriving in August, the airfield had already received the attention of the Luftwaffe and the young pilots realised they had been pitched into the front line. Geoffrey's experiences are recorded in his best-selling autobiography, 'First Light', which is recognised as being one of the finest records of the great air battle. He flew Spitfires from Biggin Hill and it is a faithful replica of his aircraft which now stands outside St George's RAF Memorial Chapel in Main Road; next to it is the Hurricane of the late Peter Brothers.



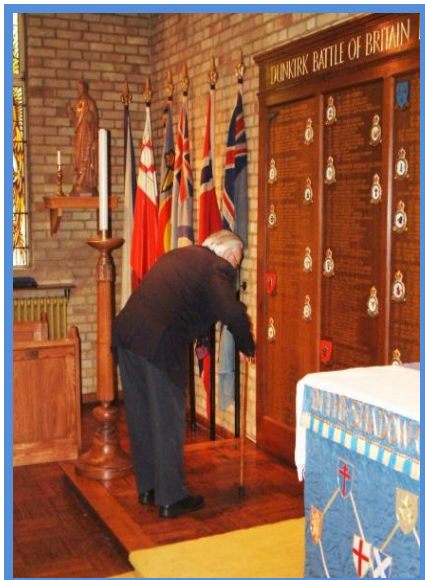
Standing below the replica Spitfire Geoffrey flew in the Battle of Britain are , left. Geoffrey Wellum DFC with his parent Jean Kondratiuk and Rodney Scrase DFC



The plaque at the base of Geoffrey Wellum's Spitfire at Biggin Hill

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It was the first time Geoffrey had visited the Chapel and found it a profoundly moving experience to both see the replica of the aircraft in which he got '...quite badly shot up' as well as the long list of his former friends and colleagues who lost their lives flying from Biggin Hill. These are all recorded on the memorial panels behind the altar at the Chapel.



In the RAF Chapel Geoffrey Wellum looks at The long list of friends and colleagues from 92 Sqdn who were killed whilst flying from Biggin Hill.

After the Chapel visit Geoffrey was driven a very familiar route the White Hart at Brasted, which was the 'Squadron Pub'. Famous for its association with the pilots from Biggin Hill, the pub interior has changed over the years but was instantly recognisable to Geoffrey from the outside. He recounted that they would either telephone the pub direct from the squadron dispersal and order half-a-dozen pints, which would be on the bar when they arrived, or they would announce their imminent arrival with a loud hailer mounted on the car demanding be immediately

His visit was organised by the Biggin Hill Battle of Britain Supporters' Club, who are raising funds for the airfield Heritage Centre. Geoffrey signed items at the Chapel which will be sold to raise cash and may be guest speaker at the club's annual dinner. The Heritage Centre project received a major boost last week when the newly inaugurated Mayor of Bromley, Councillor David McBride, announced that he was making the Heritage Centre project his nominated charity for his mayoral year. Readers can learn more about the project and its progress on their web site: www.bhbobsc.org.uk



Outside the White Hart at Brasted. Both men knew the pub well when they were Spitfire pilots.

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